Announcement

Workshop on GIS Tools Supporting Ecosystem Approaches to Management

Geographic Information Systems (GIS) are a key element in the development of place-based ecosystem approaches to living marine resource management. This is because the number of dimensions necessary to fully evaluate species interactions, habitat associations and bycatch issues relies on tools that can handle these layers in a geographically explicit framework. Furthermore, GIS software allows for multidimensional visual representation of important ecosystem attributes and mapping which is necessary for effective public communication and decision-making.

NOAA has launched a series of pilot projects to develop fishery ecosystem plans for each of the four Fishery Management Councils on the East Coast. These pilots are being supported by a parallel funded project with NOAA's Ocean Service to more fully develop GIS approaches for managing and researching marine fishery ecosystems.

To explore the state-of-the-art and future requirements for GIS tools supporting ecosystem-based fishery management, NMFS and NOS are co-sponsoring a workshop at the NOAA Coastal Services Center in Charleston, South Carolina from September 8-10.

The goals of the workshop are to:

- Increase awareness and demonstrate the capabilities of ecosystem-based fishery management, and how spatial data and geoprocessing techniques can be used support these efforts.

- Understand the priority issues facing fishery managers and scientists in developing and implementing ecosystem-based fishery management plans.

- Develop requirements for GIS tools to support the needs of fishery managers and scientists, and ensure that these requirements are broad enough to serve all regions of the country.

- Provide clear guidance for the joint NMFS/NOS GIS tool development project.

We are inviting workshop contributors from a broad range of functional areas, such as GIS and IT experts, fishery scientists and managers, and ecosystem researchers. A broad range of organizations such as Fishery Management Councils, non-federal agencies, and multiple line offices within NOAA are included.

The workshop will consist of two components. The first will involve a series of formal demonstrations and presentations from NMFS and non-federal scientists and managers demonstrating GIS functionality and applications appropriate to ecosystem management. These presentations will cover fishery-based GIS applications and novel approaches from allied fields. Second, the workshop will have several breakout sessions intended to identify fruitful extensions of current approaches and modeling, and information needed to make GIS tools supporting ecosystem approaches more applicable for science and management.

Please save the dates of September 8-10, and plan on participating for what should be a lively, informative, and productive workshop. A draft agenda, along with detailed information on meeting registration, travel, and accommodations are attached. Please confirm with me if you are able to participate.

Regards,

Steve Murawski
Ecosystem Pilot Projects Manager
NOAA-Fisheries Office of Science and Technology